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SUBJECT: NIGERIA AVIAN FLU UPDATE FOR JUNE 30

REF: ABUJA 1608

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¶1. Summary. Economic officer attended on June 27 the foreign donors meeting on AI in Nigeria. The FAO reported new outbreaks in Taraba State and Lagos State. Recent outbreaks of African swine fever occurred in Benue State. The concern is that pigs could act as a vector for humans for highly pathogenic avian influenza. As of May 30, Nigerian farmers lost about 704,107 poultry birds, of which 288,662 died of AI and the remainder were culled. The need continues for prompt compensation, effective action by the states, and better AI human and animal surveillance. The UN/Abuja will approach President Obasanjo to seek improved cooperation between the Ministries of Health and Agriculture. End summary.

AI outbreak in Taraba State

¶2. Economic officer attended on June 27 the UN/foreign donors meeting on the avian influenza (AI) in Nigeria. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported a confirmed outbreak of AI in Taraba State, on Nigeria's eastern border with Cameroon. This involved 74 households in a total of four villages in the Ibi Local Government Area (LGA), as well as 983 birds, all of which were culled. The virus may have spread to the nearby Wukuri LGA, from which samples have been sent to the Vom National Veterinary Research Institute (NVRI). The outbreak affected small, backyard poultry farmers who expressed "very stiff" displeasure over efforts to kill their birds. Male villagers wanted to attack the cullers but in the end did not. Villagers acted on their fear of receiving no compensation for their poultry. Some killed apparently ill birds, cooked them three times, then ate them. Others quickly sold sick birds for 60 naira apiece - compared to the 250 naira per bird they would receive, if compensated.

Outbreak in Lagos State

¶3. AI broke out on about June 12 on a cooperative farm in the Ojo LGA of Lagos State. Altogether, 27,362 chickens and 60 turkeys were culled; these belonged to 70 of the 140 cooperative farmers. An informant called the Ministry of Agriculture on June 12 and reported his suspicion of AI at the farm. A state field team then visited but found nothing. On June 14, following the informant's second call, a field team again visited the farm and found nothing suspicious but sent poultry samples to the NVRI. An FAO official said he suspected the cooperative farmers concealed evidence of AI. The NVRI confirmed AI only on about June 23, which an FAO official termed a "worrisome delay." Ministry of Health officials went to Taraba and Lagos States and took a very small number of human samples, all of which tested negative for AI.

#### African Swine Fever in Benue

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¶4. The FAO reported recent outbreaks of African swine fever (ASF) in Benue State - where about two-thirds of more than 70 pigs belonging to one farmer died. (Note: The FAO's Web site calls ASF a "highly contagious viral disease" of domestic pigs resulting in up to 100% mortality, and warns of ASF's "catastrophic effect" on pig producers.) Benue State is historically a large pork producer. UN officials expressed concern over pigs' possibly acting as a vector to humans for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). The FAO is asking the NVRI to test samples of affected pigs to confirm the virus in Benue is ASF and not HPAI. There is no compensation for pigs in Nigeria.

#### Continuing concerns over GON inaction

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¶5. The FAO reported that as of May 30, Nigerian farmers lost  
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about 704,107 poultry birds, of which 288,662 died of AI and the remainder were culled. The Government of Nigeria (GON) reported June 14 it had paid 34,409,130 naira (about \$269,000) in compensation for 414,403 culled birds, and that payments of 36,409,130 naira for 123,206 birds were pending. The FAO said poultry farmers are "very frustrated" by the delay in receiving compensation, so donors must emphasize to the GON the highly negative effects of the lack of a prompt compensation system, as well as the need for better, faster human and animal surveillance.

¶6. A senior UN official said the UN/Abuja must tell the GON there is a need not only for compensation but timely payments. The states must move toward accepting their responsibilities. AI in Nigeria is not finished, and there is reason for "great concern" if the affected pigs in Benue have HPAI. There remains a great need for an effective public-information campaign on AI. The UN agencies therefore will approach Nigerian President Obasanjo with a "quiet word" to seek improved cooperation against AI between the Ministries of Health and Agriculture.  
FUREY